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CLOSURES: A NON-LINEAR SKETCH OF THE BUNKER STATE

NECROPOLITICS BUNKER STATE, CONTROL, NON-LINEAR, NON-LINEARITY,
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The “bunker state” is a concept taken from many different sources, with many different meanings. For some political geographers, the ‘bunker state’ refers to states organized around the dual and intertwined imperatives of oil industry monopolies of military regimes – post-colonial Algeria being on the most often-cited examples. Others have used the term to describe the kind of neo-colonialism exhibited Israel, which builds itself as a fortress buttressed by a permanent state of war taking place in a constantly-shrinking periphery. Israeli prime minister-turned defense minister (until 2013), Ehud Barak described Israel as a “villa in the jungle”, an invocation of classic *Hearts of Darkness*-style colonialist imagery – a

self-description which would probably be gleamed upon by the technicians and bureaucrats of the militarized petrostates as well. The top-tiers of the pyramidal bunker state tend to celebrate their affluence, positioned as they are far above the writhing mass of humanity.

In the writings of Arthur Kroker the notion of the bunker state takes a different, yet not dissimilar, dynamic. For Kroker, the bunker state is the organizational diagram upon which all countries in so-called post-industrialized core of the transnational capitalist system are set to converge. The globalization of capitalist economies and information-communication infrastructures has ushered in, he argues, a “liberal fascism”, that is, a “disciplinary liberalism” driven by consumption and leisure industries on one hand, and the rhetoric of “international economic competition”.ⁱⁱ This generates, in turn, the bunker state in terms of strict immigration restrictions in order to help regulate low-wage labor pools in the global south. Going back to the era in which Kroker was first penning these thoughts, this variant of the bunker state can be seen in full through the policy frameworks exercised by the Clinton administration, from NAFTA legislation to the president’s attack on immigration on the grounds of ‘tax-payer burdens’, ‘job-theft’ and the transgression of the nation’s sacred laws. Kroker’s liberal fascism is thus an attempt to describe what lurks in the center of the so-called progressivism of American “Third Way” politics and the neoliberal social democracies in the European Union.

Today a bunker state is coming into view in the United States that seems to adopt much from each of these variations. Like the post-colonialist nationalist state, the merger of the fossil fuel industry with the strong military institutions stands to take center-ground in the logic of governance (this is not to say that this is a new phenomena, of course – only that it is a tendency that is intensifying and increasing in visibility).ⁱⁱⁱ And just as Israeli governmentality proceeds from the intersection of self-identity, warfare, architecture and urban planning, the nativist and right-populist visions of the ‘organic’ body-politic are integrating with the fusion of hard governance, fortified borders and militarized urbanism. These developments do not mark, however, an absolute break with previous modes of governmentality: while the neoliberal logic governing the particular relationship between capitalism, the state, and the world market might be shifting, the anti-immigration position comes in the wake of extreme increases of deportations and the building-up of the governmental agencies tasked with managing the affairs in the borderlands. This, in turn, has only been part of a much wider militarization of everyday affairs and the increased subordination of life, whether in molecular or molar registers, into its unique and often imperceptible forms of discipline. Liberal fascism gives way to a new fascism. Biopolitics to thanatopolitics.

Command-and-control systems are notoriously brittle, lacking in the elasticity necessary for truly grappling with the contingent nature of things. In previous eras, the strong centralized force, be it in the factory or the military unit, might have made more sense (albeit almost not in any liberatory or truly radical mode) in environments where sheer scale and scope was the determinant factor in survival. But as time goes on populations involve, economic stratum shift and mutate, technological advancement leaps forward and diffuses. Possibilities where there were none before open up, and divergent path operate as multipliers. Scale and scope become bellicose and cumbersome under the rapidity of complexity; centralized sinks of power falter in the face of network formations and non-linear processes.

Complex, self-organizing processes cut across all scales of organization, human and non-human organization alike. The classical humanist hubris that drove industrial development to the point in which it has become an “accident megastructure, one that we are building both deliberately and unwittingly and is in turn building us in its own image.”^{iv} The image it is building however, is probably not the shimmering post-everything utopias of glass and leisure that so many futurists anticipates. It is instead the cascading succession of chemical reactions, ranging from the geology to the atmosphere, from the plastic microparticle to the sprawling megamachine, that we call – in a final moment of extreme hubris – the Anthropocene. Such a two-dimensional word does little justice to the world-shifting – even *world-shattering* – array of processes bundled up under its reductionist curtain.

Like all other torrents of positive feedback, anthropocenic forces threaten to storm and overwhelm currently-existing command-and-control systems. Every precarious domino threatens to be tipped by molecular shifts we can see or even properly determine in advance. There are already suggestions that the full-spectrum dominance of the Western forces in the Middle East, carried out by proxy dictatorships in accordance with the Kirkpatrick doctrine, was thrown into chaos *in part* by climate change: as temperatures rise, drought conditions in Russia and China impacted global wheat prices, generating across-the-board food price hikes. In politically volatile regions, rising food prices helped fuel domestic unrest that ultimately erupted across the Middle East and North Africa regions as the events of Arab Spring.^v The long-term fallout of these events continue to themselves operate as multipliers of instability, particularly in the case of Syria and the sticky ball of alliances and factionalisms that radiate from this conflict out and across the entirety of the globe.

Odds are that we've blown past every chance to avoid many of the dire predictions made about impending climate catastrophe. As we lurch into the future, the role of anthropocenic transformations in undermining the most carefully-laid geopolitical plans will only be laid increasingly bare. In the end, the murmurs coming from places like the Center for American Progress and the Center for Climate and Security will be replaced by full-bore 'crisis management' techniques crafted and honed in the experimental warzones of Iraq and Afghanistan. The relationship between the conflicts ignited at the dawn of the new millennium and climatological instability has been drawn in sharp relief by Roy Scranton, in the opinion pages of the the *New York Times*, of all places:

I got through my tour in Iraq one day at a time, meditating each morning on my inevitable end. When I left Iraq and came back stateside, I thought I'd left that future behind. But then I saw it come home in the chaos that was unleashed after Katrina hit New Orleans. And then I saw it again when Sandy battered New York and New Jersey: Government agencies failed to move quickly enough, and volunteer groups like Team Rubicon had to step in to manage disaster relief. Now, when I look into our future – into the Anthropocene – I see water rising up to wash out lower Manhattan. I see food riots, hurricanes, and climate refugees. I see 82nd Airborne soldiers shooting looters. I see grid failure, wrecked harbors, Fukushima waste, and plagues. I see Baghdad. I see the Rockaways. I see a strange, precarious world. Our new home.^{vi}

Despite the coming of this strange, precarious world, the coming infrastructure of the bunker

state rejects publicly (though almost certainly not privately) the very mechanics of anthropogenic climate change. So a disavowal paves the way for the reconfiguration of US domestic government into the central committee of the deep petrostate: the institutionalized political expression of the 'dark money' networks that have been combating climate science for well over a decade now. The irony, of course, is that the pursuit of the petrostate, smuggled in under the patriotic sloganeering of "drill, baby, drill" and "American energy independence" will only serve to exacerbate, in the long run, the very forces that are being disavowed. In their will to power, the detached doyens of the bunker state play the role of diggers of mass graves.

III.



Among the looming horrors is the way that the bunker state will react to the mass migration that will be generated by climate change. The current so-called "immigration crisis", a dehumanizing rhetorical device deployed by the rising far-right forces, is but a foreshadow of things to come – something that is driven home when we take into consideration the relationship between the conflicts that spur this flight of humanity and conflict-induced stressors. The regions of the globe south where temperature increases and desertification are most expected are also home to some 500 million people – a vast swath of humanity that is already being castigated by the incoming bunker regimes as criminals, thieves, murders, and rapists, as subhumans incompatible with the oh-so-enlightened perspectives of Western civilization. In order to build material and immaterial walls between great masses of people, Samuel Huntington's neoconservative fantasy of the "clash of civilizations" is revived at its most eschatological, with every populist, nativist, and producerist fear tapped, intensified, and exploited in order to centralize power.

It is at this point that the infrastructure of the bunker state and the self-conception of the body intersect. In his poignant analysis of the personal writings of the proto-fascist Freikorps, Klaus Theweleit shows how the German paramilitary fighters – the direct forerunners of the SS – exhibited a strong horror towards a tangled constellation of concepts: women, communists, immigrants, liquidity. The concepts of "floods", "tides", "torrents", etc., all threaten

to overwhelm and drown the rigid, noble, and organic male body, itself identified with the sense of national community itself. “[W]ithin the old order, the new flood was rising before every dam, threatening to pulverize its petrified forms of life.” “The grave-diggers of Germany had wielded their spades for the last time, piercing through the ancient dam of traditional state authority: an artificially created tumult flowed in a broad stream through Germany.”^{vii} These anxieties take a profoundly sexual hue: flood, liquidity, flow, all are bundled up in a negative sexuality, a sexuality that is infused with fears of the unhygienic, the impure, and the dirty. To touch to flood is to become dirty and sick.

Is this no different from today? The nativist fear of the immigrant is so frequently rendered in that common terminology: floods, torrents, deluge. They are cast as a filthy insurgency contaminating the clean and pristine contours of “developed” civilization: *animals sleeping on mattresses in the streets of Paris! There is Sharia in the venal ghettos of Detroit! The American Southwest has descended into savagery!* The preferred terminology and hang-ups of the alt-right are riddled with this anxiety, with the “multicultural man”, himself a by-product of some conspiracy involving academia and “Cultural Marxism”, being a “cuck”, a race traitor that allowed the Other to take the white, female body as their own. As Out of the Woods describes,

The term at once alludes to a racialised, psycho-sexual anxiety over miscegenation, and a penetration of the nation by “rapefugees”, imagined as hordes of swarthy sexual predators. Neither Trump’s well-documented sexual predation (seen by many of his supporters not only as acceptable, but as laudable white heterosexual virility), nor indifference to abuse scandals with predominantly white perpetrators (compare the British far right’s differing interest in the Rochdale and Savile abuse cases) represents a negative in this affective configuration. This is due precisely to the emotional nexus of the racialised nation and sexual entitlement of ‘protecting our women’ [sic] from racialised foreigners in order to better reproduce the white nation.^{viii}

The bunker state aims to transform anxiety into passion. With every chant of “build the wall”, this passion reached ever higher, a libidinal anxiety poised to congeal into new infrastructural and architectural forms. Even if the supposed wall is never built, the expansion of the anti-immigration apparatuses set in place by Bush and Obama will continue to shape the relationship between bodies and space. It’s telling that Trump’s campaign ads cited materials put out by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), itself founded by the notorious white supremacist John Tanton; it is just one node in what has been described as the “Tanton Network”, an interlocking system of think-tanks, funding bodies and advocacy groups that promote, among other things, anti-immigrant propaganda, pro-eugenic junk-science, and white nationalism.^{ix} Perhaps the notable legislative push that the Tanton Network stands behind has been Arizona’s 2010 “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” (Arizona SB1070), which oversaw a massive expansion of the state’s police apparatuses and the encouragement of racial profiling. As far back as a decade ago, through the maneuvers on the level of state politics and in the overt (rather than covert) alignment of conservative politicians with racialsists, the outline of the bunker state could be glimpsed.

IV.



During the early years of the 'war on terror', the newly-formed US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) entered into a series of agreements with the state of Israel . From border security to airport security to port security to everyday police activities, the 'crisis management' expertise and correlated technological systems cultivated and developed by the Israeli bunker state became the blueprint for apparatuses designed to 'protect the homefront' from 'threats, foreign and domestic'. "Israel's vast experience in protecting its borders from terrorists, and the technologies developed as a result, have been put to use in the United States", enthused an on-the-issues memo from the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee.^x

From top to bottom, the form of governmentality pursued by the Israeli government has been that of colonialism, a logic that bleeds intrinsically into the forms of 'border security' that it has now turned into a lucrative business venture within the current globalization of warfare. As Eyal Weizman has drawn out to delirious extent, Israeli colonialism and security operations in the Palestinian territories has exerted a profound influence on the space of space, from the architecture of individual buildings (through the development of 'national styles' that serve the dual purpose of establishing fortifications) to urban planning to the development of the infrastructures that uphold it.^{xi}

Colonialist practice has always exploited the construction of colonized subject as the impure, dirty other. This dichotomy sets up the colonizer as an agent of civilization, as a force of purity, something capable of 'cleaning up' the backwards savagery of the colonized. To quote one colonial administrator, "Imperial cleanliness is developed by sanitation... colonising by means of the known laws of cleanliness rather than military force."^{xii} Yet the military dimension always reveals itself: the application of the "known laws of cleanliness" never lands far from the utilization of violence, especially when the colonizing processes transforms into a vast exercise in counter-insurgency. Deployed against a given population, this combination of militarized pressure and hygienic concerns become a tool of managerial control by erecting

borders, separating certain parts of the population from others, and attempting to impose a sense of rational management, as an impulse for individuals to carry out the processes of 'imperial cleanliness' upon themselves.

Such discourses pepper Israeli colonialism, described by Weizman as “a common national-territorial imagination that sees the presence of Palestinians as a ‘defiled’ substance within the ‘Israeli’ landscape, or as ‘matter out of place’...”^{xiii} As always, these notions of racial and cultural purity operate in the service of orders of power that turn not only outward, but inward as well. Castigating the Other and seeking to limit the entry of the Other into a given system assists command-and-control systems in their bid to maintain dominance. Simply put: less variables in play reduces the amount of complexity, and thus allows governance to proceed more smoothly. Despite its high-tech accouterments, discipline is still fairly rudimentary in its internal mechanics: it is an affair of arranging bodies in space, regulating their movements, and making them productive. The promotion of homogeneous identities and homogeneous cultures becomes a blunt object with which the state will try to beat down complexity with, to render it inert and malleable, lest the flood wash away the organized body and the system it is moored within.

V.



The traditionalist anxiety of 'losing the body' extends not only to unfamiliar, foreign bodies, but to the great urban assemblages that house so many. As urban spaces transform into sprawling metropolises that harbor the majority of human beings on the planet, the military has begun to take note. In October of 2016, a leaked video circulated for training purposes by the US State Department's Joint Special Operations Command went viral on the internet. Titled "Megacities: Urban Futures, the Emerging Complexity", the video revealed paranoia on the part of the armed forces by the tendency towards hyper-urbanization, particularly in the global south. "Megacities are complex systems where people and structures are compressed together in ways that defy our understandings of city planning and military doctrine. These are future breeding grounds, incubators, and launching pads for adversaries and hybrid

threats.”^{xiv} As an additional report noted, the “U.S. army is incapable of operating within the megacity.”

The video continues to bemoan not only the labyrinthine nature that spontaneous urbanization is taking, but the loss of control of infrastructures by ‘legitimate’ political actors (ie, city and state governments). Noting the zig-zagging, nonlinear chains of cause and effect that spiral without warning through our anthropocenic reality, fears over climate-induced multiplier effects are foregrounded by the Pentagon’s warriors. In the megacity, the orderly logic of civilization appears to breakdown, and the fusion of autonomous infrastructures and rapid development appear as forces indistinguishable from natural disasters. Urbanization, then, poses a crisis for control systems – and thus calls for the creation of new tools and techniques for power to reassert itself.

Such fears are not new. As far back as the 1990s, planners at the RAND Corporation warned of the coming era of “urban insurgency” and the lack of an adequate means an “urban counter-insurgency”. In 2002, Air Force Captain Troy Thomas wrote in an article for the *Aerospace Power Journal* that “Rapid urbanization in developing countries results in a battlespace environment that is decreasingly knowable since it is increasingly unplanned.”^{xv} Such concepts of the developing world as a space of feral futurities and urban savagery underpinned much of the military discourses surrounding the ‘war on terror’ and even the notion of “terrorism” itself. “The Orientalist notions of racialist worth that helped shape the real and imagined geographies of Western colonialism are particularly important for the ‘war on terror,’” writes Stephen Graham. “Discourses of ‘terrorism’ are crucially important in sustaining such differential values and binaried notions of human worth. Central here is the principle of the absolute externality of the ‘terrorist’ – the inviolable inhumanity and shadowy, monster-like status of those deemed to be actual or dormant ‘terrorists’ or those sympathetic to them. The unbound diffusion of terrorist labelling within the rhetoric of the ‘war on terror’, moreover, works to allow virtually any political opposition to the sovereign power of the US and its allies to be condemned as ‘terrorist.’”^{xvi}

Such conflation and anxieties come back to haunt the streets of the developed world in the inescapable pattern of the ‘boomerang effect’. Filtered through the gaze of “homeland security”, the at-home urban environment becomes a low-intensity battlespace, wherein the poor, the immigrant, the person of color, the activist, so on and so forth, all become specters of the terrorist. 24/7 closed-circuit television monitoring, so-called “zero-policy policing”, the militarization of the police themselves, and strategic forms of economic development honed in smoldering wreckage of Baghdad all converge in the urban zones of the “homeland”. What Foucault once described as the governmental technique of *biopower* – the ability of the government to provide life and wellness through the combination of applied sciences, statistical analysis and ‘legibility’ of the population – is also the raw materials for this mode of thanatopolitics, the permanent war of the government against the governed.

Not to be outdone, Trump’s campaign relied heavily on the ‘dangerous city’ trope, castigating urban environments as war zones and stressing the archetype of ‘good police officer’ fighting for cause of ‘law and order’. In power, he will have at his disposal a vast machine, the goal of which is precisely the ‘taming’ of the city.

Georges Bataille: "Architecture is the expression of every society's very being... [But] only the ideal being of society, the one that issues orders and interdictions with authority, is expressed in architectural compositions in the strict sense of the word".^{xvii}

In his account of the origins of the disciplinary society, Foucault draws our attention to the diagrammatic dimensions of 'plague-stricken towns' at the end of the seventeenth century. When signs of plague would appear, a sharply interior/exterior binary would be erected, the transgression of which was punishable by death. On the inside, the town was partitioned into segments, each under the control of an authority, under whose watch syndics monitored the affairs of each individual street. Inspections were carried out endlessly and coordinated through the basic and fixed chains of command; everything that took place in these inspections, as well as the subjects of them, were recorded in endless record-keeping and tabulation. The movements of bodies were confined to small, easily monitored spaces, suspended in a perpetual state of discipline and command during the duration of the plague. "[I]n order to see perfect disciplines functioning," Foucault wrote, "rulers dreamt of the state of plague."^{xviii} In the bunker town – both in the reality and the idealized form – the exclusion of contagion became the justification for an all-encompassing form of police activity.

Between the years of 1853 and 1869, Baron Haussmann carried out a grandiose public works project program in Paris for Louis Napoleon. What had originally been, to quote Haussmann, a "dense belt of suburbs... built at random, covered by an inextricable network of narrow and tortuous public ways, alleys, and dead-ends, where a nomadic population without any real ties to the land and without any effective, grows at prodigious speed"^{xix} was transformed into an orderly and linear urban landscape based on the form of the grid. The snaking labyrinths that had bred insurrection and invisible commerce were replaced with wide avenues that were equitable for not only 'legitimate' forms of commerce and business, but the rapid mobilization and movement of troops throughout the city. The hodge-podge and spontaneously-constructed array of buildings were removed, their inhabitants displaced by the thousands, with large and uniform kinds of imposing architecture. Haussmann: "The order of this Queen-city is one of the main pre-conditions of general security." The gambit of the planner and the politician stands as a stark foreshadow to the sorts of concerns currently fermenting within the halls and offices of the armed forces.

Haussmann's urban design was the transformation of Paris into the segmented and disciplined plague city; after all, his plans followed the wake of an incredibly destructive bout of cholera that killed upwards of 18,400 people. His new Paris was described as being the cleanest city in the world, a hygienic utopia; as the spaces above were reconfigured to facilitate the gaze of power, a 350-mile sewer network, replete with the cutting-edge technology of its day, replaced the earlier sewage system that appeared as a logical extension of the city's now-gone bottom-up growth. Unsurprisingly, the political was not far from the reforms. "Spaces in which society's outcasts could gather, the sewers [had been] refuges from which to challenge the bourgeois order above."^{xx} Or, as Jean Valjean, the protagonist of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* put it, "Crime, intelligence, social protest, liberty of conscience, theft, all that human laws pursue or have pursued, have hidden in this hole." Under the reconstruction of Paris, such dynamics became all but impossible.

Le Corbusier, the architect, urban planner, and arch-modernist, would later laud Haussmann's deconstruction and reconstruction of Paris, seeing it as the forerunner to his own vision of the Radiant City: an urban utopia for industrialized future. Le Corbusier's design would, like Haussmann's Paris, stem from a grid layout for streets, themselves rendered as wide avenues pointing inwards towards the city center. There, at the core, would be the seat of power, where the affairs of the city would be managed by enlightened technocrats and administrators; as one passed from the core to the periphery, one would find factory zones with adjacent neighborhood blocs for the industrial working class.

Though the Radiant City would never come to fruition, it contained within itself elements that had either come to pass (such as Haussmann's urban reforms) or would come to pass (industrial society lorded over by technocratic managers). Ultimately, however, the urban form Le Corbusier was striving towards marked the ideal of the disciplinary logic of the plague city diffusing into everyday life. In the case of his *Ville Contemporaine* plan,

Le Corbusier proposed that his working-class apartments be constructed as self-contained cells, each carefully insulated from its neighbors. Opaque walls were used throughout, with the only glass facing individual patios and gardens. Each apartment would be totally soundproof, ensuring that, as Le Corbusier wrote, "even a hermit in the depths of a forest could be not more cut off from other men"... Even entertainment would take place in isolation, away from the contagious comradery of saloons and movie houses: "The gramophone or the pianola or wireless will give you the exact interpretation of first-rate music, and you will avoid catching cold in the concert hall, and the frenzy of the virtuoso."^{xxi}

While such grandiose plans were not realized, the sort of architectural atomization has found itself actualized in the towering skyscrapers that have become the homes of the super-rich elite. As city core are reshaped by the flows of finance capital and the so-called processes of 'post-industrialization', urbanization has locked into vertical growth, ushering in a new array of what is being described as "vertical gated communities". With helicopters and helipads, closed off causeways and lifts, and private, direct-to-suite elevators, the nouveau elite – usually representative of the FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate) industries – can practically live their lives detached from the comings and goings of the underclasses tooling in the spaces beneath. Stephen Graham has noted that in many spaces around the globe, these new patterns of exclusion and expulsion transform themselves in a *spectacle*: "From the patios, pools, cocktail bars, and penthouses on top of towers and podiums, the violent landscape of the city far below become an aesthetic spectacle to be consumed from afar. A troubling and gritty place is rendered instead as a tranquil spectacle, an aesthetic background."^{xxii}

For the elite classes in the brave new world, the bunker home plugs into the wider security system.

VIII.



...when the insurgents manage to penetrate parliaments, presidential palaces, and other headquarters of institutions, as in Ukraine, in Libya, or in Wisconsin, it's only to discover empty places, that is, empty of power, and furnished without any taste... the truth about the actual localization of power is not hidden at all; it's only we who refuse to see it for fear of having our comfortable certainties doused with cold water. For confirmation of this, one has only to look for a moment at the banknotes issued by the European Union... what is it that appears on euro banknotes? Not human figures, not emblems of personal sovereignty, but bridges, aqueducts, arches – pieces of impersonal architecture, cold as stone. As to the truth about the present nature of power, every European has a printed exemplar of it in their pocket. It can be stated in this way: power now resides in the infrastructures of this world. Contemporary power is of an architectural and impersonal, and not a representative and personal, nature. – The Invisible Committee^{xxiii}

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ivBenjamin Bratton *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* MIT Press, 2016, pg. 5

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xiiiWeizman *Hollow Land*, pg. 20

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xvQuoted in Mike Davis *Planet of Slums* Verso, 2006 pg. 204

xviStephen Graham “Cities and the ‘War on Terror’”, in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Volume 30, Issue 2, June 2006, pg. 257

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xviii Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* Vintage Books, 1995 pg. 199

xixQuoted in James C. Scoot *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* Yale University Press, 1999, pg. 61

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